

I Led Three Lives

George Aylesworth

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The following article is a first person account of the author's involvement in the FBI's program of using students to spy on students. Although occurring at Purdue University, the author feels that such activities are far from rare, and that the implications contained in it are fairly universal.

In the fall of 1968, a friend (who will not be named and who is no longer a danger) and I called the FBI office in Lafayette, Indiana, in pursuit of money and excitement, to inform on what we thought, when we witnessed it, to be a criminal act. Speaking for myself, at this time I had no political convictions or prejudices.

We talked to FBI Agent Ron Baradel and arranged to meet him on the steps of the courthouse in Lafayette, and after some cloak and dagger type dramatics, (He told us he thought we were part of a trap laid for him by the Peace Union) we made it to his office in the post office building several blocks away.

After a lot of verbal sparring and foolishness from all parties, we were rather surprised to find him not interested in the criminal act (not in their jurisdiction), but willing to pay \$10 apiece for reports covering student activities on the Purdue campus. These activities were finally narrowed down to those of the Peace Union, and any hint of SDS activities. He gave us three names I can not remember and told us to especially watch these people. We were also told that we were only two of a sizable number of such "spies," but that they couldn't tell us who they were. This ended the first meeting.

After we turned in several reports, one of which had to be redone because it was typed on Purdue form paper (for some reason completely taboo), we had a second meeting, and shortly thereafter a third. These rendezvous took place in the parking lot of a restaurant on U.S. 52 Bypass in West Lafayette in mid-morning. For the third interview FBI Agent John Smock was present. He gave us \$25 cash for which we signed a receipt (this was the only money we ever received) and told us to use pseudonyms in the future. I chose the name of Bill Stevens. We were also told just to put the address on the envelopes containing the reports and not Baradel's name when we mailed them. I still have in my possession a slip of paper on which Agent Baradel wrote his name and the address:

Ron Baradel
P.O. Box 461
Lafayette, Indiana 47902

During this interview we were given the specific thing we were to look for; We were to report the names of anyone talking about Cuba. Agent Smock assured us these people wouldn't be harmed, only detained in the event of any national crisis by order of the Attorney General. This made me wonder naturally what was the magic of Cuba that people were going to be arrested for no more reason than that I reported them as talking about it. Several days later I turned in my final, probably the fourth, report in which I said I overheard a person, whose name I didn't catch, talk about Cuba. At this time I still wanted their money, but had already realized I couldn't give any names. Up to this time I had only given the names of those people they had mentioned previously in the context of... At the Peace Union meeting of some date, so and so was present.

Now I realized that I would be the criminal to continue any correspondence with these people and especially if I gave any names. Their interest in certain people and subjects prompted me to listen to what these people had to

say and to study these forbidden subjects as best I could. I felt compelled to do this on my own and to avoid these people to whom I should have gone to immediately with this story mainly because of feelings of guilt. These same feelings of guilt have been a plague, not undeserved, causing me much pain and despair.

There is no defense that can be offered for these acts that could persuade me to acquit myself of the guilt, but let it be known that I have long since chosen sides and when the day arrives that the FBI starts seizing the people on its lists of names, they will have to come for me also as I share fully the convictions of those they wished me to betray.

It would do well for the reader upon finishing the above to consider the possibilities for thwarting such operations. It is my belief that many of the informers are people out for some excitement and some cash. Also very probably some of them are recruited following a bust for drugs or shoplifting, etc., and have made a deal for dropping the charges. That is, they are largely not dedicated investigators by any means and very often have no real convictions.

The presence of such people is very important to the FBI and local lawmen because they only have a limited number of professional undercover people, who can be used sparingly and very effectively only when the low paid amateurs do the routine observing and name gathering. The amateur work, when sorted and examined probably provides enough points of interest to keep the professionals busy. Most of these — informers can only be discouraged by fear.

When the pursuit of excitement becomes too dangerous and \$10 is too small a price for terror they will probably quit. Surveillance of FBI offices and agents' movements is quite possibly the only way to discover an informer's identity, and at least one of them must be found before real action to discourage spying can be taken.

It should be always kept in mind that the most effective action to stop such activities may hinge on one of the spies revealing himself. He will be afraid and ashamed to come forward and will need positive encouragement. If the treatment accorded this one is encouraging to his counterparts, presently more admissions may be forthcoming. All this of course is based on the belief that subversion in student and other youth movements is very extensive.

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